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Dominican Republic

Trade Policy Monitoring

Spanish Labeling in Consumer Ready Food Products 2002

Approved by:

Kevin N. Smith

U.S. Embassy, Santo Domingo

Prepared by:

Carlos G. Suarez

Report Highlights:

The Government of the Dominican Republic has announced that it will begin enforcing its Spanish labeling requirements after August 15, 2002.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Santo Domingo [DR1], DR

Consumer-ready food exports from the United States to the Dominican Republic may be at risk if their labels are not in Spanish. The Dominican government, through its Standards & Quality Control Office (DIGENOR) within the Industry and Commerce Secretariat announced, for the second time this year, that it intends to begin enforcing its labeling standards (NORDOM 53) in mid August 2002. The announcement was made through correspondence addressed to the U.S. Ambassador dated June 26, 2002.

NORDOM 53 is a regulation which details the labeling Standards for the Dominican Republic and has been in place for several years but has never been enforced.. It contains all the labeling requirements for locally produced and imported food items. The Dominican labeling standard is based on CODEX recommendations. Although U. S. Standards follow CODEX recommendations, many consumer-ready products are not labeled in the Dominican Republic's official language of Spanish.

Post notes that about 30-40 percent of consumer-ready products in grocery stores are imported from the United States and most are labeled only in English. It is possible that market share for U.S. consumer-ready products in the Dominican Republic may be lost to Mexico, Venezuela, Spain, Costa Rica, and other countries if U.S. exporters do not address the labeling issue.

The correspondence indicates that as of August 15, 2002, DIGENOR could begin forcing retailers to withdraw food items that do not comply with labeling requirements. Although FAS Santo Domingo is not sure if DIGENOR will carry out its threat, U.S. food exporters should begin focusing on multiple language labeling for food items to be exported to the Dominican Republic.